

# COVID-19 Customer Vulnerability

Customer Research  
Insights Report  
Wave 4, Sep 2021

*Research was conducted to understand the degree of customer vulnerability, as well as customers' consumption and sentiment towards energy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.*



## The Energy Charter

Survey conducted July 19<sup>th</sup> to Aug 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021  
N=3035, representative of the age & gender of the Australian population  
People refers to respondents of the research

### Collaboration across supply chain

*This 12 months' research by Deloitte into customer vulnerability through COVID-19 is a collaboration between Energy Charter signatories Jemena, ActewAGL, Energy Queensland, Essential Energy and Powershop Australia, together with Simply Energy.*



31 of people are optimistic about Australia's economic direction



52% of people agreed that COVID-19 had increased their stress levels



67% of respondents stated they are highly concerned about the lasting impacts of COVID-19



36% of respondents intend to reduce spending on non-essential items in the next 3 months

## Key themes from the COVID-19 Customer Vulnerability Research

Recovery trajectory has been curbed by the widespread lockdowns that have occupied many of the eastern states of Australia

- A decrease of 4% in respondents who are optimistic about Australia's economic direction (compared to Wave 3)
- An increase of 4% in those who reported reduced working hours due to COVID-19 (compared to Wave 3)
- An increase of 2% and 6% respectively, amongst those reporting a reduction in individual and household income (compared to Wave 3)
- A decrease in 3% of respondents who believe that their lives will be better a year from now

Hardship groups that have relied on now non-existent income supplements have incurred the largest degree of financial hardship

- 17% of JobSeekers lost their job due to COVID-19, which is over 5x proportion of non-JobSeekers. A further 26% of JobSeekers have also had their hours reduced or have lost some of their job
- 24% of Young Adults (18-24) have had their hours reduced due to COVID-19, which is greater than the 16% in Wave 3
- 27% of Renters have experienced a decrease in income in the last 3 months (May - Jul) compared to 19% of non-renters.
- Without consistent financial support, the hardship gap between these three groups and the broader population will grow at an increasing rate

COVID-19 related stress has worsened as the pandemic escalates around the country, particularly amongst older respondents and women

- 52% of respondents agreed that COVID-19 had increased their stress levels, an increase from the 45% recorded in Wave 3
- 43% of respondents are highly concerned about the risk of contracting COVID-19, 5% higher than in Wave 3
- 39% of respondents stated that COVID-19 has caused them to feel helpless, which is 7% higher than Wave 3 results
- 70% of women and 65% of bushfire impacted respondents (highest average age of all hardship groups) are concerned about the lasting impacts of COVID-19

Reduction in spending is the most common alleviating measure that respondents are utilising. Adversely impacted groups are more likely to reduce household spending

- In the next 3 months, over a third (36%) of all respondents intend to reduce spending on non-essential items, whilst 24% stated they intend to reduce spending on essential items such as food and cleaning products
- These results however differ between hardship groups, with respondents suffering from greater hardship more likely to reduce their household spending.
- 46% of JobSeekers, 39% of Young People (18-24) and 42% of Renters intend to reduce spending on non-essential items
- 32% of JobSeekers, 29% of Young People (18-24) and 31% of Renters intend to reduce spending on essential items

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